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INFO OCT-01 /03 SC-01 RSC-01 USIA-12 H-02 NSC-10 NSAE-00 L-03 INR-07 P-04
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SUBJ: FOREIGN OBSERVERS OF VIETNAM ELECTIONS

1. TOTAL OF 116 OFFICIAL OBSERVERS, OF WHICH 27 WERE JOURNALISTS, FROM TWENTY-FOUR COUNTRIES AND THE ICFTU ACCEPTED GVN INVITATIONS TO ELECTIONS. THIS IS OVER HALF OF 41 COUNTRIES TO WHICH INVITATIONS WERE EXTENDED, AND WAS BETTER RESPONSE THAN GVN ANTICIPATED.

2. GVN ARRANGED INTINERARIES FOR OBSERVERS TO VISIT HUE AND CAN THO IN ADDITION TO SAIGON ON ELECTION DAY. IN EACH LOCALITY OBSERVERS WERE FREE TO VISIT VARIOUS POLLING PLACES IN AND ABOUT TOWNS.

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US GROUP ADDITIONALLY VISITED BAN ME THUOT, TUY HOA, TAY NINH AND LONG XUYEN, THEREBY AFFORDING COVERAGE OF ALL FOUR REGIONS AND SAIGON ON ELECTION DAY.

3. ALTHOUGHIT IS TOO EARLY TO JUDGE FULLY, EMBASSY AND GVN

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FOREIGN MINISTRY BELIEVE OBSERVERS CAME AWAY WITH OVERALL FAVORABLE REACTION. NONE OF THE VISITORS HAS SO FAR ALLEGED PUBLICLY TO HAVE SEEN SIGNIFICANT FRAUD OR COERCION. MANY EXPRESSED GREATER SYMPATHY WITH SOUTH VIETNAMESE PROBLEMS AS RESULT OF FIRST-HAND OBSERVATION. THUS ON THE WHOLE FOREIGN OBSERVATION OF ELECTIONS APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN WORTHWHILE IN TERMS OF BOTH IMMEDIATE FAVORABLE ASSESSMENT OF ELECTIONS AND BETTER LONGER-TERM COMPREHENSION OF US/GVN OBJECTIVES. AIRGRAM WITH DETAILS FOLLOWS.
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